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General Assembly
Fifty-third Session

Official Records

First Committee
13th Meeting
Thursday, 22 October 1998, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Mernier . . . . . (Belgium)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda items 63 to 80 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects; introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all items

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): This meeting will be devoted to consideration of agenda item 80, rationalization.

(*spoke in English*)

More precisely, we will consider the rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee.

As delegations are aware, by decision 52/416 B, adopted on 29 June this year, the General Assembly requested the Chairman of the First Committee to continue consultations with regard to the revitalization, rationalization and streamlining of the work and reform of the agenda of the Committee in all its aspects and to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session.

(*spoke in French*)

I should like to inform the Committee that I have held consultations in the framework of the Bureau along those lines. Before I report the results of those consultations, I would like to give those delegations wishing to speak the opportunity to do so.

I call on the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on a point of order.

Mr. Ri Jang Gon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I have asked for the floor to seek clarification in relation to procedural matters, as Member States might be well aware. My first point relates to the exercise of the right of reply. My delegation understands that Member States can exercise the right of reply twice per agenda item, not twice per meeting. I hope that the Bureau has a copy of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, document A/520/Rev.15, which, in paragraph 9 on page 67, reads as follows:

> "The number of interventions in the exercise of the right of reply for any delegation at a given meeting should be limited to two per item."

My delegation understands that each Member State can exercise its right of reply twice per agenda item, not twice per meeting. However, in your ruling yesterday, Mr Chairman, you said that each Member State could exercise its right of reply only twice per meeting.

If Member States follow this logic, then they can speak in exercise of the right of reply more than twice per agenda item, depending on the duration of the discussion on each agenda item. In other words, we could engage in endless debates through the exercise of the right of reply on a per-agenda-item basis. My delegation asks the Bureau for a clarification. This is not for the sake of my country only, but for the sake of all Member States that might have to deal with the exercise of the right of reply at a later time.

Secondly, with regard to points of order, I raised my flag yesterday for that very reason to ask for clarification. However, for no reason, the Chairman neglected to respond

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to my request. That is a violation of the rules of procedure and also an act of discrimination against a Member State that has a legitimate right to speak on a point of order. In this connection, I think that the Chairman and those members of the Bureau who advised the Chairman to do so should take full responsibility. I sincerely ask the Bureau to apologize for their wrongdoing. This is, again, not for the sake of my country but in the interest of all Member States, so that the same mistake cannot be repeated in connection with other legitimate Member States at another time.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I shall be very brief in my reply. The Chair assumes responsibility for all decisions and for all procedures that we put into effect.

As regards the right of reply, we would suggest to the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that it approach the Bureau, which in due course will consult with the legal division of the Organization. I should like to know if that reply satisfies the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ri Jang Gon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Thank you for the clarification. Mr. Chairman, if you wish to cooperate with me concerning this misconduct with respect to the exercise of the right of reply, I will be at your disposal.

Secondly, I ask the Bureau to apologize for not giving me permission to speak on a point of order.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I should like now to return to the subject of this afternoon's meeting. I will repeat my question: are there any delegations that wish this afternoon to speak on the agenda item before us this afternoon?

I note that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea wishes to speak once again.

Mr. Ri Jang Gon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I raise this question for the purpose of a very simple clarification with respect to two things.

According to your ruling yesterday, Mr. Chairman, can Member States understand that they can exercise the right of reply more than twice per agenda item? That is a very simple question.

Secondly, in relation to my request to speak on a point of order, which was turned down for no reason, I ask for a response from the Bureau before we proceed to another agenda item.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): As I suggested to the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the problem is that the First Committee, in its general debate, deals with all agenda items. Therefore it is extremely difficult to determine whether a right of reply is being exercised on one or several agenda items. In the circumstances, it is up to the Bureau, and more specifically the Chairman, to make a judgment call, which is what I did yesterday afternoon.

I would suggest is that we now proceed to the actual work before us this afternoon. I thank the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for his understanding, and I reiterate my offer to see him in private, with the Bureau and with the legal counsel of the General Assembly and the Organization, on this question.

I would like to conclude discussion on this particular issue now. I am not prepared to continue this debate and to take the time of 150 delegations on this matter. I made an offer to the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. I believe he has accepted it, and I will take it now that the debate on this subject is closed.

Would any other delegation like to take the floor on the subject before us this afternoon — agenda item 80, on the rationalization of the work of the First Committee?

Mr. Hajnoczi (Austria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia — and the associated country Cyprus, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area — Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway — align themselves with this statement.

In the general debate we emphasized that the rationalization of the work and the reform of the agenda of the First Committee remain a priority for the European Union. We were therefore encouraged by the opening statement of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who called on us to update, streamline and revitalize our work and who expressed his interest in the result of our discussions thereon.

We consider the reform of our working methods and of the organization of our work to be an ongoing process

geared to the changing requirements and expectations imposed on us by a world that is changing at a faster pace than ever. The disarmament world should be no exception to this development, and the methods of work and the organization of the First Committee have to undergo constant examination.

I want to be very clear on this point. We do not want reform for reform's sake. We want reforms that make our work more useful, more efficient and also more understandable to a wider public, which sometimes might be deterred from developing greater interest in our deliberations by simply trying to find its way through the agenda of the First Committee.

We should therefore aim at reorganizing and reforming our Committee to make it more user-friendly — user-friendly to delegations and national Governments, as well as to non-governmental organizations, journalists and the public at large. Our objective should be to better organize our debates, to make them more focused and to produce results which are not only understandable to the chosen few gathered in this room today, but to a wider audience.

During the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, we achieved consensus on a number of measures to improve the quality of the work of our Committee, to make better use of the scarce financial and logistic resources of the Secretariat and to organize our work more in line with the concrete demands of our important deliberations.

We agreed to shorten the length of the First Committee's sessions and to improve our methods of work by merging the thematic debate with the introduction and consideration of draft resolutions. The latter should allow for a more focused and output-oriented discussion during the second part of our substantive work session. The European Union is looking forward to the implementation of these decisions during our current session.

This year, we intend to build on the achievements of previous General Assembly sessions and to focus our attention on the question of the reform of the agenda of the First Committee. The current agenda does not follow any specific logic. It is the result of successive additions to a core agenda. The result is both difficult to manage and difficult to comprehend.

In our view, we should therefore reclassify the existing items according to a simple, logical thematic approach — one which we have already adopted in resolution 48/87 and implemented in the presentation and consideration of draft resolutions in the substantive work of the First Committee. We would then assign each item a place on the agenda alongside other items dealing with the same broad subject. We would then work our way through the agenda, rather than being forced to resort to the complex arrangements that we currently go through. Such a logical reordering would not only facilitate a more focused discussion, but would give delegations a clearer picture of each issue and its relationship to others.

Such an approach should be discussed thoroughly in order to reach a solution satisfactory to all, and we trust in the Chairman to conduct deliberations on the subject during the coming weeks of our work.

It is the view of the European Union that many items that appear on the agenda of the First Committee deserve our yearly attention, due to the important developments that we witness and the dynamics of the international discussion on these items. Other issues undergo less rapid change and could therefore be debated only every second or third year. We should all exercise some restraint in putting such items on the agenda every year. The annual appearance of an item on the agenda should not be interpreted as the measure of the importance of the item. The quality of the deliberations is the only relevant criterion and a productive debate every second or third year does better service to an issue than the automatic inclusion of an item on the agenda every year.

The same holds true for reports of the Secretary-General. Here, too, we should exercise some self-restraint in asking for countless reports that burden the Secretariat with additional work and which, despite the best efforts of the Secretariat to fulfil these mandates, sometimes contribute little to the actual work done in the First Committee. At the same time, the reports of the Secretariat could be of a more synoptic nature to give delegations an overview of the current developments and discussions on a specific item, instead of just containing the responses of Member States on specific questions.

Every delegation in this room shares the wish to make our work more productive and to use our time and resources as effectively and efficiently as possible. Such practical steps as starting on time are a welcome initiative to contribute to this common objective. We have proof of this common interest in last year's agreement. Let us try to build upon this achievement. Reform, revitalization and rationalization are not an issue which lends itself to

politicization and sterile ideological debate. We should all endeavour to find the common ground on which we can proceed to improve our work. The European Union stands ready to contribute constructively to this common effort during the whole fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

Ms. Koppe (Australia): My delegation would like to make just a few brief points on the important subject of rationalization of the work of the First Committee, which is a priority issue for Australia.

Australia welcomes the progress made at the resumed session of the First Committee during the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. We welcome the decisions to cap the duration of the Committee's sessions and to streamline its programme of work. It is important now that we maximize the advantages of these reforms by utilizing the time freed up to undertake more intensive and serious consultations on draft resolutions with a view to narrowing the very wide divergences of views on certain issues.

We would like to stress the importance, also, of maintaining momentum on this agenda item, the most pressing priorities being to restructure the agenda so that it is more logical and meaningful. Without wishing to denigrate the importance of the special sessions that generated a number of compendium items on our agenda, it is time to frame the agenda so that it communicates more clearly what the Committee is really doing. One way of doing this, as our European Union colleagues have suggested, is to group the items according to theme.

In addition, my delegation considers that much more work can be done to encourage biennializing or triennializing certain resolutions. There are too many resolutions on our agenda which are of a routine nature and do not address events of immediate concern. This is borne out by the fact that the texts are virtually identical each year. Such resolutions should, at the very least, be biennialized and it is clear that very little effort is being made in this direction at the present time.

We would welcome informal consultations on such an exercise, to commence at this substantive session of the Committee with a view to decisions on further rationalization being made during the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Manickam (India): I will make only very brief and preliminary comments on the Chairman's non-paper. We need to study it very carefully. We will come back with detailed comments on it on every issue.

There are two things I would like to mention that come to mind immediately. We would like agenda item 73 — "Review of the implementation of the recommendations and decisions adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth special session" — to appear as a separate agenda item. It has a lot of meaning for my delegation. We would like to have the main, broad outline of the agenda item — there are four sub-items under it — to remain as it is.

My second observation relates to the listing of the item on the role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament under "Other international security matters". We do not agree with that categorization; that item should not come under international security matters. We had seen an earlier paper that included the category "Collateral disarmament measures", and we would strongly request that the item on the role of science and technology should be listed under the heading "Collateral disarmament measures".

The Chairman: The non-paper that was circulated this afternoon is obviously a compromise among different views. The Bureau cannot accommodate all views. In any case, I have taken note of the observations made by the representative of India; they will be discussed again by the Bureau and we will see if we can reach agreement on them.

Mr. Manickam (India): This is the first time I have been made aware of this proposed arrangement of items; I believe the Bureau took the responsibility of reorganizing it, but I think all that members should be given the chance to comment on the arrangement. My delegation was not consulted on it. We had, of course, seen some papers, but we thought the matter was going to be discussed in informal consultations. We are still available for consultations whenever we are needed.

The Chairman: The intention is that this non-paper should be an attachment to a decision by the Chairman, as was done last year. Before we decide on the final version of the attachment, we will have consultations with interested delegations. So this is not the end of play for the non-paper. We will try to accommodate all wishes.

Ms. Rovirosa (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation is grateful for the Chairman's non-paper, some elements of which are certainly most interesting. We think it is good that the Committee is working in a positive

way to rationalize its work as much as possible. We believe, however, that every proposal should be the subject of careful consideration, and we are fully prepared to participate constructively in all consultations with a view to reaching a conclusion that would make it possible for the work of the First Committee to be carried out with the greatest possible effectiveness.

Mr. Kim Moon-hwan (Republic of Korea): I wish today to present my delegation's views on the issue of the rationalization of the work of the First Committee. My delegation notes with appreciation that progress was achieved last June at the resumed fifty-second session of the General Assembly. The crux of the decision adopted was that the work of the First Committee should be conducted and concluded within 30 meetings and within a time-frame not exceeding five weeks. On the basis of recent experience, that objective looks practicable and tenable if we conduct our business in a timely and efficient manner.

I wish now to make some suggestions on substantive issues relating to the rationalization of the work of the First Committee. With regard to the agenda of the Committee, it is fair to say the current agenda does not follow any logical pattern. An agenda rearranged in several clusters similar to those used in recent years would provide a useful framework for facilitating the organization of our work and for expediting the Committee's deliberations. In this regard, my delegation believes that the proposals made by the European Union and Canada last year deserve serious consideration.

In that connection, my delegation thanks the Secretariat for providing copies of the proposed rearrangement of the agenda for the First Committee. After careful study and consideration, my delegation the day before yesterday communicated its views through the Chairman of the Asian Group. Permit me to summarize my delegation's proposals. First, my delegation was of the view that the idea of establishing a separate section entitled "Transparency and confidence-building" had some merit, and that this section could contain three subitems. My delegation is very glad to see that the non-paper before us reflects our view. Secondly, it was our view that the section entitled "Collateral disarmament measures" should be renamed "Other disarmament and international security matters"; again, my delegation is pleased to find that the non-paper reflects our position.

Under our proposal, there would have been no separate section on "Prevention of an arms race", and its two subitems would have been included under "Other disarmament and international security matters". We can, however, go along with the format set out in the non-paper.

All in all, despite some divergences of view on the details of the various sections, my delegation believes that the Chairman's non-paper will be a good basis for progress.

Regarding the draft resolutions of the First Committee, there is no denying that a considerable number of draft resolutions are repeatedly submitted in the First Committee every year with no substantial changes. This practice prevents us from concentrating on items that require in-depth, productive debate. Items and their related draft resolutions should not be discussed every year in an nearly automatic manner; it is our firm view that more items and draft resolutions should be biennialized or triennialized, and I add my voice to that of the representative of Australia in that regard. In addition, we believe it would be desirable to adopt certain routine or procedural draft resolutions as draft decisions rather than in their present form.

Like other efforts to reform the United Nations, our rationalization effort should be an ongoing and continuing process. We do not agree that there should be drastic changes in the working methods of the First Committee. However, we should not hesitate to offer fresh ideas for securing efficiency and transparency in the work of the First Committee.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): As the representative of the Republic of Korea said, many of the proposals made by his delegation and by the Asian Group in general are reflected in the non-paper before the Committee. That was indeed the spirit in which the document was prepared. And let me repeat that it is not a final document: next week there will be informal consultations among interested delegations on the work remaining to be done on the document.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): My delegation too wishes to make some general remarks at this stage, pending detailed discussion of the Chairman's proposed rearrangement of the agenda for the First Committee.

I would like first of all to express our happiness and sincere appreciation to the Chairman of the First Committee at its last session for his efforts, which have already led to the adoption of a decision at the resumed session to limit the length of the First Committee's sessions and to merge the thematic debate with the introduction and consideration

of draft resolutions. That decision was a very positive sign in the right direction.

There are many issues that we can discuss under this particular item. I am sure one of them is the rearrangement of the agenda items of the First Committee. This is a very important subject, and I am sure that there will be further elaboration and discussion of this idea in informal consultations and in the regional groups — and particularly of your proposal, Mr. Chairman, for the preparation and presentation of which we would like to thank you and the Bureau very much.

I just wanted to make some general comments in this particular regard. The first is that it is my understanding that the proposed rearrangement is only a rearrangement of the agenda items and that we are not discussing merging agenda items, whether those agenda items are similar or different, and that our discussion will be limited only to rearranging the agenda items as they exist. It is the firm conviction of my delegation that we cannot merge items or delete any item from the agenda without the consent of the State of States that have requested that these items be inscribed on the agenda. Every one of us attaches special importance to some items rather than others. But, of course, this is a very sensitive issue that deals with the sovereign rights of States to have their issues discussed in the General Assembly. So I hope we will have a chance to elaborate upon that when we discuss this informally. But the main direction is acceptable, and we can discuss it further.

There are other issues, some of which have been touched upon today by the representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union. One important issue that we discussed last year, although perhaps informally — and I think the time has come to take action on it — is the harmonization of the voting conducted in the First Committee and the one conducted in the General Assembly. In the First Committee we vote on draft resolutions presented under L-numbered documents. The reports of the First Committee to the General Assembly are issued under a totally different format, reverting to the original item number in the agenda of the General Assembly. I must say that his is something that creates a lot of confusion: we vote on a draft resolution here under a certain cluster and then we go into the General Assembly and find that the draft resolutions are scattered throughout many items according to the agenda of the General Assembly. So this is also one very important issue that I hope we will have the time to address this year under this agenda item and to see what we can recommend to harmonize the voting process here in the First Committee with the voting process on our draft resolutions in the General Assembly as well. My delegation will be very positive in the consideration of the Chairman's paper and of other proposals that have been put on the table today.

The Chairman: All delegations have seen, obviously, that we are not deleting any items. All the original items are back in the paper. I must also point out that there were proposals to merge a few items that are very close, if not identical. But for the reasons just explained, we refrained from doing that.

Mr. DuPreez (South Africa): Like previous speakers, my delegation would also like to register its appreciation for the immense task of rearranging the items in a more logical way that you have embarked upon, Mr. Chairman, about which you have already prepared a non-paper. We would certainly be interested in exploring this further, especially in view of the decision taken at the resumed session of the First Committee during the fifty-second session with regard to reducing the time-frame of the Committee and to combine the thematic debate with the consideration of draft resolutions. We see this as yet another step forward.

But we would also like to stress that we have to go slowly and carefully in this area and that we would certainly need more time to reflect not only on the headings, but also on which items should fit under other headings. In a first reading, we would prefer if we could perhaps stick as closely as possible to the cluster headings that we had last year in the debate of the L-numbered draft resolutions. In this context, I would like to add my support to what has just been said by the representative of Egypt. There is also a lot of confusion in my delegation when it comes to voting in the General Assembly. It not only would make it easier to vote there, but it could make it easier to prepare for the meetings of the First Committee.

We would also like to stress that, given the urgency that we have to complete draft resolutions, we should consider that we need more time to look at these issues, which are of the utmost importance. We cannot simply rearrange for the sake of rearranging, but we need to look at a logical order. At the same time, we are not ready and we have no mandate to even suggest that certain items be combined or deleted, and I support the statement that the Chairman has just made in that regard. It is for the countries or the States that support those draft resolutions themselves to decide, and we have to adhere to that.

We would look forward to further informal consultations in this regard. I think that we need to give the regional groups further time to consider this issue further in the week to come.

Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): As delegations before me have done, I would also like to express my appreciation to you personally, Mr. Chairman, for the work that has been done on the proposal to rearrange the agenda of the First Committee.

We believe that this document is a fine basis for further improvements and calls for more in-depth and detailed consideration. I also believe — and I have heard several statements by various delegations to this effect — that, as we emphasized last year when we looked at the question of rationalization, there are certain difficulties related to the large number of draft resolutions presented annually in the First Committee. This represents an enormous task and a handicap when there are over 40 draft resolutions, sometimes three or four per item. So perhaps we should think about all the ways in which we can rationalize the consideration of these questions.

But I think there are also some difficulties in doing this. Based on the interest expressed by certain delegations on these very items, it will be difficult to tell them to accept introducing their draft resolutions only once every two or three years.

But to return to the proposal to rearrange the agenda of the First Committee, my delegation stated last year that it was in complete agreement in this regard because it seems to us that the dispersal of the items makes them difficult to examine. We also stated that we were therefore fully ready to accept the idea of rearranging them. We also insisted on the idea that in this respect there should be very well-defined clusters that include the questions of nuclear disarmament and weapons of mass destruction, as the Chairman's paper does. We will therefore send these documents to our authorities so that they can be looked at more closely.

We would like to ask the Chairman for the opportunity to come back with more detailed and developed comments so that we can, as national delegations, express our concerns on all the points and on the rearrangement as a whole.

The Chairman: I wish to say a few words about the paper that members have in front of them and to stress that we have limited the changes to only a few. Members will see that, compared with the past, there is absolutely no change in substance to the "Nuclear weapons" cluster; the same for "Other weapons of mass destruction" and "Conventional weapons". We have a new cluster, "Transparency and confidence-building measures". It was suggested by the representative of the Asian Group. We believe that it makes sense.

(spoke in French)

The same goes for "Prevention of an arms race".

I invite delegations to look at this paper, taking into consideration that it has been prepared on the basis of their own comments. It is not the Bureau that established the content of this paper. It is the result of comments made by the various regional groups.

Does any other delegation wish to take the floor on this subject?

Mr. Dehghani (Iran): First of all, I would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for preparing this non-paper. Unfortunately, since we are a small delegation, due to other engagements I did not have enough time to look at it. I arrived just now. However, I would like to make preliminary comments on the last part of the paper, comments that I have already given to the Chairman of the Asian Group.

On the item on the "Role of science and technology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields", my delegation is of the view that this item cannot be grouped with other international security matters. It has other aspects. I suggested that this item be shifted to another grouping. It would be appreciated if this idea could be taken into account in a further elaboration.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I would like to remind members that next week the Bureau will hold informal meetings on this document. Delegations should be advised that they are all welcome to participate. I thus invite delegations to think about this document before making detailed proposals and to formulate, in writing if possible, their suggestions for these initial meetings.

(spoke in English)

The procedure the Chair would like to follow is to allow delegations to review this non-paper more closely over the next several days. The Chair will then call an informal meeting to discuss comments on the non-paper. If

general agreement is reached on a way to rearrange the agenda items, I shall prepare it as a draft decision of the Chairman for implementation at the fifty-fourth session. The Committee will take up the decision during the action phase.

Are there any comments on the procedure I am recommending?

If not, I would like to remind delegations that the deadlines established by the Committee itself for the submission of draft resolutions will be adhered to.

Let me review. Draft resolutions under all the international security and disarmament agenda items — that is, items 63 to 79 — are to be delivered to the Secretariat by 1 p.m. tomorrow, Friday, 23 October.

Draft resolutions under agenda item 80, "Rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee", are due by 6 p.m. tomorrow. In connection with these draft resolutions, I would like to point out that this later deadline will not apply to any eventual decision that the Chairman might propose regarding the rearrangement of agenda items.

Mr. DuPreez (South Africa): I am sorry to take the floor again, but I wish to just make a brief statement and to urge you, Mr. Chairman, to consider this request from at least the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, which South Africa represents, to carefully reconsider the deadline. When the deadline was decided on during the organizational session of this Committee we indicated that we would meet it to the extent possible. But we have to stay focused on what we are doing in the First Committee. We are busy here with a multitude of issues and draft resolutions, and it is impossible to have solid draft resolutions if one has to race for time.

Not only does the Non-Aligned Movement have a number of its own draft resolutions that it needs to further consider, it also has draft resolutions that are not necessarily Non-Aligned Movement draft resolutions. In order to come up with meaningful draft resolutions — which is, after all, why we are here — on behalf of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement and, I think also a number of other countries, we would like to urge the Chair to reconsider the deadline. We would like to suggest that the deadline be postponed until 6 p.m. Monday.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): This question was put to the Bureau this morning. The problem that arises is one for the Secretariat. The entire Secretariat is mobilized for this weekend.

I understand full well the concerns of delegations that they be able to present their draft resolutions under the best possible conditions. Thus, and in agreement with the Secretariat, the Chair will postpone the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions on security matters to 6 p.m. tomorrow. But we cannot go beyond that.

Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): I fully respect the decision made by the Bureau.

I believe that it is also a question, given the current circumstances of the Organization, of avoiding as far as possible unnecessary expenses that could result from the revision of proposals submitted. I fully agree with you, Mr. Chairman, that there should be a deadline for the draft resolutions that have already been prepared and on which the consultations are almost finalized.

Thus, I would ask the Bureau and the Chair for a little more flexibility so that tomorrow, Friday, at 6 p.m., the draft resolutions already ready could be submitted. As for those still requiring consultations — draft resolutions such as those the representative of South Africa just mentioned — I ask for a little more time — until Monday — to allow delegations to submit their finalized drafts, thereby perhaps avoiding revisions that would have financial implications that no one in this room wishes to incur.

These draft resolutions of the First Committee are extremely sensitive, and thus at times require lengthy consultations. This is why I appeal to the Bureau and to the Chairman to have the flexibility that we have enjoyed every year at every session of First Committee.

Mr. Manickam (India): I support the previous two speakers, South Africa and Algeria. In fact, this was a subject of discussion in the Non-Aligned Movement working group today. We thought we should ask you, Mr. Chairman, to be more flexible, because the time is too short.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I should nonetheless like to remind representatives that, at the request of one of the delegations of the Non-Aligned Movement group, the original deadline had already been deferred to 12 p.m. Friday. I have now deferred it again to 6 p.m.

I shall now give the floor to the Secretary of the Committee, who will give us some details on the implications of the deferral of the deadline.

Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung (Secretary of the Committee): After listening to several delegations in connection with the extension of the deadline for the draft resolutions, I should like to make the following points.

First, last year there was no extension. There was one the year before, of course, and it caused some confusion and resulted in some complaints. So last year the deadline was strictly observed, and there was no problem. This year the original programme of work set the deadline about two days in advance — actually, on Wednesday. This was proposed with the understanding that the deadline would be observed, and that is why it was changed to Friday.

The Secretariat already has organized and mobilized the available human resources to deal with the tremendous number of draft resolutions. As of now we have only three draft resolutions, and we anticipate about 50. In other words, the Secretariat will face tremendous pressures and difficulties in getting them out, because on Monday and Tuesday Documents Control has to deal with other committees, which also have their documents. It is for that reason that Documents Control has already informed all the translators and editors that they should be ready for tomorrow evening. By tomorrow at 1 p.m., or 6 p.m. if the deadline is extended, we have to finish all 50 draft resolutions so that the translators and all other personnel concerned can work through the weekend and get everything out on Monday. In that way next week, according to our programme of work, we can deal mainly with thematic discussions, introduction of the draft resolutions and so on. That is all I want to say. This deadline has to be strictly observed so that the agreed programme can be implemented.

Mrs. Rovirosa (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation would also like to join the appeal of the delegations of South Africa, Algeria and India that the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions be postponed until Monday at 6 p.m. We understand the explanation just given by the Secretary of the Committee regarding the enormous amount of work and difficulties involved in this postponement. But we also consider that draft resolutions should be duly negotiated and that in order for them to be well presented and viable, it is at times necessary to postpone the deadline for submission.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): I shall be very brief, as I do not wish to repeat what the previous speakers have just said. Of course, we understand all of the circumstances that Mr. Lin has just outlined. But allowing additional time for the consideration and preparation of draft resolutions will also save the Secretariat the trouble of issuing many revisions for each of the draft resolutions. Furthermore, if considerations arise which might require delegations to communicate with their capitals for instructions, I think the weekend will provide ample time for all delegations to do so. I would therefore join those who are seeking your indulgence, Mr. Chairman, and that of the Secretariat to postpone the deadline to Monday at 6 p.m.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): Before responding to the various delegations that have spoken, I should like to suspend the meeting for five minutes in order to consult with the members of the Bureau.

The meeting was suspended at 4.10 p.m. and resumed at 4.15 p.m.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): As members know, the Bureau is perfectly entitled to decide to retain the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions, but it understands the arguments that have been put forward by various delegations. The Bureau is also responsible for the proper functioning of the Secretariat and wishes to ensure that it be maintained.

Consequently, I propose the following solution. The deadline will be retained at 6 p.m. tomorrow, except for 10 draft resolutions. I am prepared to accept by noon tomorrow the postponement of the submission of 10 draft resolutions. That is the solution proposed by the Secretariat. It will make it possible for the Secretariat to do its normal work on Saturday and Sunday and for various delegations to work on sensitive draft resolutions, which I hope will not exceed 10 in number.

That is my proposal to delegations and I should like to hear their reactions to it.

Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): I wish first to thank you, Sir, for this display of flexibility by you and the Bureau on the deadline for submission.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that it will be hard to determine which 10 draft resolutions are to be chosen, given that, at this juncture, every one, including those that moments ago were not remotely sensitive, may suddenly become extremely sensitive and require our attention

throughout the weekend. Thus, the Bureau should tell us which they are, since any delegation is very likely to claim its draft resolution among the 10.

I would therefore ask you, Sir, to specify which 10 are to be chosen. If it should prove difficult to identify the 10 draft resolutions that are to enjoy the extension until Monday, perhaps we might say that any delegation — other than those that are ready to submit draft resolutions tomorrow, of which there may be quite a few — wishing to hold further consultations may do so on Monday. I do not believe it unreasonable, with the revisions to be made — which, given the financial and logistical stakes for the Secretariat, are certain to proceed at a breathtaking pace — to request a grace period to benefit all those delegations that are as yet unready to submit their draft resolutions.

Mr. Manickam (India): I should like to hear your view, Sir, on the statement just made by our colleague from Algeria. As far as our draft resolutions are concerned, however, we will try to submit them by tomorrow. I thank you once again for showing flexibility, but we are waiting for an answer to the valid question raised by Algeria.

Mr. Du Preez (South Africa): I, too, thank you, Sir, for showing some flexibility. As a national delegation, we would very much try to accommodate your wish that we submit our various draft resolutions and the various draft resolutions that we subscribe to by tomorrow afternoon at 6 p.m. But we, like the delegation of Algeria, would like to know which 10? What happens if there are 11 or 12?

I think we need to show greater flexibility, to allow delegations with draft resolutions with serious problems to submit them on Monday while the rest of the texts can be submitted tomorrow and be processed by the Secretariat, as Mr. Lin indicated earlier.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): We seem gradually to be approaching a solution.

I would appreciate it if the various groups could let me know by 3 p.m. tomorrow how many, and which, draft resolutions should be granted this extension. I hope that there will be no more than 10 such texts. It is not for me as Chairman to decide for delegations which draft resolutions are the sensitive ones. May I take it that this arrangement is suitable to the delegations concerned?

It was so decided.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I wish to announce that, in the light of conversations with the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, it appears that yesterday's exchange between that delegation and the Chair took place on the basis of a misunderstanding. The Chair wishes to express its regret at that misunderstanding and hopes that such misunderstandings will not arise in the future.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.